



Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN L2 EXTENSIVE READING
(ER) AS IN NILAM AND L2 ESSAY WRITING PROFICIENCY
OF FORM FOUR STUDENTS**

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OF FORM FOUR STUDENTS**

by

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A project entitled **The Relationship between L2 Extensive Reading as in *Nilam* and L2 Essay Writing Proficiency of Form Four Students** was written by Kon SiewYung and submitted to the Faculty of Human Resource and Development in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Education with Honours (English as a Second Language).

It is hereby confirmed that the student has done
all the necessary amendments of the projects for acceptance.


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ABSTRACT

The Relationship between L2 Extensive Reading as in *Nilam* and L2 Essay Writing Proficiency of Form Four Students

Kon Siew Yung

The main objective of this study was to find out if there is a positive correlation between L2 extensive reading as in *Nilam* and L2 essay writing proficiency of Form Four students in two rural secondary schools in Kuching. It also intended to find out the students' perceptions towards *Nilam* reading programme, the extent of improvement that the monitored and unmonitored *Nilam* reading programme could bring in improving L2 essay writing proficiency. There were 120 participants, comprising 60 Form Four students from the monitored group and 60 students from the unmonitored group with equal number of male and female, involved in this study. The data was collected through a questionnaire, and an L2 essay writing task. For data analysis, SPSS was used to analyse the data in the questionnaire. As for the L2 essay writing task, it was assessed using a marking scheme based on the criteria of good writing suggested by Pemberton (1993). The findings of the study indicated that students from both groups were having positive perceptions towards L2 extensive reading as in *Nilam*. For the L2 essay writing ability, it was found that students from the monitored group showed a significant improvement in their essay writing ability whereas the students from the unmonitored groups did not show a significant improvement. The findings also indicated that there was a positive relationship between L2 extensive reading as in *Nilam* and L2 essay writing proficiency. The conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future studies were also presented in this study.

ABSTRAK

Perhubungan antara Bacaan Secara Meluas dalam Bahasa Inggeris seperti dalam Nilam dan Kecekapan Penulisan Karangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris bagi Murid-Murid Tingkatan Empat

Kon Siew Yung

Objektif utama kajian ini diadakan adalah untuk mengenalpasti sama ada bacaan secara meluas dalam Bahasa Inggeris seperti dalam Nilam mempunyai kolerasi yang positif dengan kecekapan penulisan karangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris bagi murid-murid Tingkatan Empat dari dua buah sekolah menengah luar bandar di Kuching. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi murid-murid terhadap Program Bacaan Nilam, and sejauh mana Nilam yang monitor and tidak monitor boleh membantu murid dalam memajukan kecekapan menulis karangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Sebanyak 120 orang peserta yang merangkumi 60 peserta dari kumpulan monitor and 60 peserta dari kumpulan tidak monitor telah dipilih untuk kajian ini. Data-data telah diperolehi melalui soal selidik dan sebuah penulisan karangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Data-data soal selidik telah disemak dengan menggunakan SPSS dan hasil penulisan telah disemak dengan menggunakan kriteria-kriteria yang dicadangkan oleh Pemberton (1993). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa murid dari kedua-dua kumpulan mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap bacaan meluas seperti dalam Nilam. Bagi kecekapan menulis karangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris, hasil kajian yang diperolehi menunjukkan bahawa murid dari kumpulan monitor dapat membuat kemajuan yang ketara manakala murid dari kumpulan yang tidak monitor tidak dapat menunjukkan kemajuan yang ketara. Hasil kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat kolerasi yang positif di antara bacaan secara meluas dalam Bahasa Inggeris dengan kecekapan menulis karangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Kesimpulan dan cadangan untuk kajian seterusnya juga dikemukakan dalam kajian ini.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPRD	- Educational Planning and Research Division
ER	- Extensive Reading
L2	- Second Language
NILAM	- Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca (Reading as a Source of Knowledge)
PMR	- Penilaian Menengah Rendah(Lower Secondary Assessment)
SMK	- Sekolah Menengah Kerajaan (Government Secondary School)
SPM	- Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
UPSR	- Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah(Primary School Achievement Test)

CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explored the background and statement of problem of the study. Then it looked at the general purpose of the study, that was the relationship between L2 extensive reading (ER) as in *Nilam* and L2 essay writing proficiency. Next, it discussed the significance of the study and the key terms used throughout this paper.

1.2 Background to the Study

In most countries in East and Southeast Asia, English is taught as a compulsory second or foreign language. In today's modern and technology world, a good knowledge and mastery of English language skills is considered very important as English is an important medium in international politics, economics and social communication (Dulcie, 1987). Besides that, it also opens the door to new information and researches in science and technology, and many other areas in education and culture.

In many countries, English is taught as a second language and used as a medium of instruction for some school subjects. In a second language situation, English is also widely used in both the government and private sectors.

In the teaching and learning of English in schools, four important language skills are emphasized, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four skills are the essential skills that any literate person must possess. Among these four skills, reading is

the most important skill for English as second or foreign language students; and it is the most important skill to master (Anderson, 1999). Besides that, it is also the basis of all education (Cutler, 1988). In the English Language classroom, reading skill is taught in many different ways, such as previewing, scanning, skimming, reading for study purposes, intensive reading and ER (Spache & Berg, 1984). Spache & Berg (1984) further explained that different ways of reading serve different purposes. For the present study, the researcher was interested to find out more about second language (L2) ER as in *Nilam* and its relationship with L2 essay writing proficiency.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

English is widely used and spoken in the Malaysian society. Nowadays, many parents even speak English as their first language with their children. In schools, English is taught as a compulsory subject from pre-schools level right up to the tertiary level. However, the level of proficiency in using the language among the Malaysian students is generally weak especially in the writing proficiency. Many students are unable to achieve an acceptable level of competence in English during their public examinations like the UPSR, PMR and SPM. This phenomenon is especially prominent among the students in the rural schools. If this problem is left unchecked, it will become a serious problem in terms of employment in their future because the expected level of English proficiency is generally high in the job employment market. With regards to the poor writing proficiency among school students, it is necessary to find out ways to improve students' level of writing proficiency. In this study, the researcher would look into the relationship between L2 ER as in *Nilam* and L2 writing proficiency as well as the extents

of improvement that L2 ER as in *Nilam* can help in improving the level of L2 essay writing proficiency.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. How do the students perceive their *Nilam* Reading Programme?
2. Can the monitored *Nilam* Reading Programme help in improving L2 essay writing proficiency?
3. Can the unmonitored *Nilam* Reading Programme help in improving L2 essay writing proficiency?
4. What is the relationship between L2 extensive reading (ER) as in *Nilam* and L2 essay writing proficiency?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study hoped to determine the relationship between L2 ER as in *Nilam* and L2 essay writing proficiency of students in schools. *Nilam* Reading Programme which is introduced to both primary and secondary schools, is the most recent reading programme implemented to inculcate the habit of reading among students. The benefits of inculcating the habit of reading are undeniable. Many researchers had found that reading can help in improving the English language proficiency (Krashen, 1984; Grabe, 1991; Nagy & Herman, 1987). However, there are still many schools which have not participated actively in this reading programme. This shows that some schools are still feeling doubtful with the benefits that this reading programme can bring to improve their

students' language proficiency. Therefore, this study hoped to find out the extents of improvement that L2 ER as in *Nilam* can help in improving students' English proficiency in particular to the writing proficiency so that it can give a better insight for schools especially schools which have low achievement in the English Language proficiency.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

Extensive Reading (ER)

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), "ER means reading in quantity in order to gain a general understanding of what is read". ER is also intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading.

Yamashita (2004) defined ER as reading a fairly large amount of texts. Yamashita further explained that in ER programmes, students read relatively simpler materials than in intensive reading programmes, and they are not usually required to demonstrate understanding to a degree as detail as they would in intensive reading programmes. Instead, students are expected to read a large amount of texts mainly for the purpose of pleasure.

Palmer as cited in Day and Bamford (1997) explained that the term "ER" is originally created to differentiate it from "intensive reading", which is the careful reading of short, complex texts for detailed understanding and skills practice.

Day and Bamford (1998) defined ER as reading large quantities of books and other materials that are well within their linguistic competence. Students select books that they

are interested to read, and they read at their own speed. Students' self-selection of books will cater to their different needs and interests, and this will allow them to develop their foreign language competence at their own pace (Day and Bamford, 1998).

Day and Bamford (2002) explained that there are ten principles of ER programme.

1. *The reading material is easy.* Reading easy material which contains vocabulary and grammar well within their linguistic competence is one way to get them to read a lot. The text is considered aptly easy and well within their reading comfort zone when students find no more than one or two difficult words on a page. Besides that, reading easy material can help the affective dimension of learning to read. Students will discover that they can read foreign language material, and as they read more and more books, they will see themselves as readers in the target language (Day and Bamford, 2002).

2. *There must be a wide variety of reading materials on a large range of topics.* Reading a wide variety of reading materials will allow students to find material that they are really interested to read. Different kinds of reading material will also promote a flexible approach to reading. Students learn to read in different ways, (for example, skimming, scanning, summarizing) and for different reasons (for example, entertainment, information, passing the time) (Day and Bamford, 2002).

3. *Students choose what they want to read.* Self-selection of reading material is the key to ER. Students are free to stop reading material that is boring, too easy, or too difficult (Day and Bamford, 2002).

4. *Learners read as much as possible.* The benefits of ER come from students reading a great deal. The more the students read, the greater the benefits (Day and Bamford, 2002).

5. *The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.* In ER, students are expected to read for a range of real-world reading purposes, from pleasure to finding specific information. In addition, students are not required to achieve 100% comprehension in reading but only required sufficient understanding to achieve one's purpose (Day and Bamford , 2002).

6. *Reading has its own reward.* Students need to engage in follow-up activities after reading but they do not have to demonstrate their understanding by answering comprehension questions. The reasons for doing this is to find out what the students have understood and experienced from reading, to keep track of what students read, to monitor the students' attitude toward reading, and to link reading with other aspects of the curriculum (Day and Bamford, 2002).

7. *Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.* Students begin to read faster when selecting reading material within their linguistic competence. By doing so, they are able to progress from word-by-word decoding to fluent reading. When reading, students are advised not to look up the meaning of words in dictionaries as it will interrupt the reading process, making fluent reading impossible. Students are encouraged to either ignore the word or guess the meaning when encountering with unknown vocabulary items (Day and Bamford, 2002).

8. *Reading is individual and silent.* Most ER is done outside the classroom as homework. Students read at their own pace and on their own time. They are encouraged to reading silently (Day and Bamford, 2002).

9. *Teachers orient and guide their students.* Teachers need to introduce to the practice of ER as students may not be familiar to the freedom of making choices with the reading material. Teachers should let their students know that ER could lead to gain in vocabulary knowledge, reading, writing and oral fluency. In order to get the most out of ER experience, teachers should keep track of what and how much their students read, and the students' reactions to what they have read (Day and Bamford, 2002).

10. *The teacher is a role model of a reader.* If the teacher reads the same material that the students read, and talks to them about it, this will give the students a model of what it is to be a reader and make it possible for the teacher to recommend reading material to individual students. By doing so, teacher and students can experience together the value and pleasure that may be derived from the books they read (Day and Bamford, 2002).

In the current study, ER was treated as the possible cause for improving the writing proficiency, and the writing proficiency was treated as the possible effect ER. Concerning the amount of reading needed before it can be called "extensive", Krashen (1985) suggested that an hour per evening, whereas Carroll (1972) suggested that at least two books a week. As for the *Nilam* Reading Programme implemented by MOE to all the Malaysian schools, students have to borrow at least one book each fortnight (Ganakumaran, 2002). In view of the different ideas given above, it can be concluded that there is a great flexibility on the number of books read for ER. Most importantly, the

basic goal of ER is to get students to read as much as can be expected and make sure that they enjoy doing so.

***Nilam* Reading Programme**

Nilam is the acronym for *Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca*, literally means Reading as a Source of Knowledge. It is a kind of ER programme which is implemented by the MOE to all the primary and secondary schools starting from 1999 through “Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bil.13/1998 which dated 22 May 1998 (Fatimah Jusoh, 2003). Fatimah Jusoh (2003) further explained that the main objectives of this program is to promote reading activities among students throughout the country and encourage schools to continue generating creative and innovative ideas towards cultivating the reading habit.

This *Nilam* Programme is compulsory for all school students. For primary school, the programme starts from primary one to primary 6. As for secondary school, it starts from Transition / Form one until Form 6 (Fatimah Jusoh, 2003).

The *Nilam* programme has two levels – Level I (or *Jauhari*) and Level II (or *Rakan Pembaca* – RP). Rewards are given according to the number of books read. For primary schools, students who read 90 to 179 books are given Bronze, 180 to 269 books – Silver, 270 to 358 books – Gold, and 360 books and above – *Nilam*. For secondary schools, readers who have read from 72 to 143 books are given Bronze, 144 to 215 books – Silver, 216 to 287 books – Gold, and 288 and above – *Nilam*. When a reader is given *Nilam* award, which is the highest award, it means that a reader has reached the ultimate goal of the programme, that is, he/she has succeeded of being called a habitual reader. This

award and recognition system can be used as a selection criterion for entry into selected schools, full boarding schools or as a requirement to obtain sponsorship (Fatimah Jusoh, 2003).

The main source of reading materials is from the school resource centre. The books in the resource centre not only have to be sufficient, but also have to be suitable for the students' reading level. Therefore, the books have to be graded so that students can select books according to their own level. In order to have enough reading materials, other sources like public library, mobile library can also act as a source of reading materials (Fatimah Jusoh, 2003).

Nilam has three important elements: reading record, verification of reading and recognition. For the reading record, each student records the books he or she has read in *Nilam* Reading Book. After that, verification of reading is done by the teacher in-charge. Recognition will be given to each student based on the number of books read from Primary one to Primary six in primary schools and from Transition/Form one to Form five in secondary schools. The reward and recognition system will be noted in the students' progress record book, school leaving certificate, school declaration and special declaration after six years of primary education and five years of secondary school education (Fatimah Jusoh, 2003).

Perceptions towards *Nilam* Reading Programme

'Perceptions towards *Nilam* Reading Programme' is an individual's opinion, feeling, or understanding towards *Nilam* Reading Programme. Marzano as cited in Day and

Bamford (1998) claimed that perceptions colour our every experience and they are the filter through which all learning occurs. Therefore, it is important to have positive perceptions towards *Nilam* Reading Programme in order to gain the benefits from the reading programme.

Monitored and Unmonitored *Nilam* Reading Programme

In this *Nilam* Reading Programme, it is found that some schools have participated actively according to the requirement of the reading programme stipulated by MOE whereas some are not. In schools where there is a strict observation of the number of books read by each student through a systematic reading record is categorized as Monitored *Nilam* Reading Programme. Students under this programme are encouraged to read as many books as they can during their free time. For students who have succeeded in reaching the targeted number of books set by their schools will be given prizes. As for the students who have low record of the numbers of books read, they will be given motivation and encouragement to read more by their teachers who in-charge of the *Nilam* Reading Programme.

For schools which do not have a strict reading record of the number of books read by each student are categorized as unmonitored *Nilam* Reading Programme. Students in the schools are encouraged to read during their free time but their teachers do not keep track of the number of books read by the students. The number of books read is solely depended on the students' own initiative and self-motivation.

Writing Proficiency

Pemberton (1993) stressed that a good piece of writing should have the following qualities:

1. Awareness of readers. The writer communicates information and makes a point that readers can understand what the writer says. The writer shows consideration for readers and makes them understand the material easier. The readers' interest and curiosity is aroused from the beginning and sustained throughout the passage (Pemberton, 1993).

2. Unity. The writer presents a clear central idea or thesis, and all parts of the passage are related to that thesis either directly or indirectly. The writer does not go off the point, but rather, adheres to the central idea (Pemberton, 1993).

3. Development. The writer gives appropriate evidence to support the thesis such as by using examples, illustrations, quotations, facts, opinions, descriptive details, and other specific information (Pemberton, 1993).

4. Coherence. The writer gives fluent links from one part of the passage to the next, from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. Readers can follow the flow of ideas easily (Pemberton, 1993).

5. Organization. The writer gives information in a logical sequence suitable to the material. The material can easily be understood because the ideas are arranged in an orderly way (Pemberton, 1993).